

The Light in the Darkness

By A. W. PEACH

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Doris Lane could gather little from the kind eyes of the physician who removed the bandages, and her hopes rose. From the moment of the explosion in the chemical laboratory in which she had been employed, during the long days of suffering in the hospital, she did not dare to ask if she would be left with a badly scarred face. The question seemed, for the time being, vain and foolish in her situation, but now that life was assured, she began to wonder if for all her days she was to meet the pitying, questioning look that the unmaimed give the maimed.

"Doctor, how do I look?" she asked, smiling as bravely as she could.

The gray-headed surgeon smiled in answer, and said in his grave, kind way: "Well, little girl, I think you have a pair of the finest brown eyes I have ever seen, and your hair—"

"But I didn't mean that," she said hurriedly.

"I know, but your question put me in the old-enough-to-ask class; so I wanted to tell you." He looked at her gently. "There is just one bad scar, the others will fade, I am sure. You might bring Miss Lane a mirror," he said to the waiting nurse.

She was weak with suffering, and her mind was tortured with questions of the future, for her training had been limited and the simple matter of a livelihood was no small item now. So when she saw in the truthful glass the livid scar that raced its ugly line across her forehead, and the blotches below where the flying acid had touched, she moaned in anguish.

"Hello, By-way."

The pleasant voice cut through her darkness, and she opened her tear-filled eyes to see standing above her the attending physician, known to her as "Doctor Walter." During the month that her eyes had been bandaged, he had been to her merely a pleasant voice and gentle fingers. Now she saw



Now She Saw He Was Tall.

he was tall, tanned as if from much time spent out of doors, gray-eyed and dark-haired. His mild fun in calling her "By-way" instead of "Lane" had pleased her in her childish weakness; now, however, she turned to the pillow.

His voice was gentle, for he seemed to understand. "Look here, you must not feel that way—"

"No, but if you—were—to go through life this way—pitied by everybody," she returned brokenly. "Besides, I— She paused. "Besides what?" he urged in the same gentle fashion.

She shook her head and waved him aside. The sight of his strong, pleasant manhood, the sound of his voice, for some reason or other, made her misery all the more bitter—just why she did not know.

She did not guess the purpose in the nurse's friendly questioning that evening, but because there was no one in the world to whom she could confide some of her anxiety, she told the nurse what she refused to tell Doctor Walter. And the nurse did not tell her of that purpose, nor offer any suggestion as to how the maimed girl might solve the problem she was facing.

The next morning, Doctor Walter stopped again. "Miss Lane, I have come to make you a formal offer of a position as my secretary; I want you to look after my office; are you willing?"

She lifted her scarred face. "So that was why the nurse asked me so many questions!" She turned away. "Even you pity me."

"No, I am sincere. I really need some one, and you have had experience with drugs," he said patiently.

The quiet reproof in his voice was enough. "Forgive me, I hardly know what I am saying. Yes, if I can serve you, I want to."

"All right," he said, cheerfully. "We'll consider the matter settled."

So it came about that after a week she found herself in charge of the doctor's pleasant office.

From the day she had seen her blue-

scarred face she had not looked into a mirror. She combed her hair in such a way that her face was not revealed. The pitying glances of the patients who came in was all the mirror she needed. Keener, too, was Walter's gentleness and the way his eyes would rest upon her in moments when she guessed he did not realize that she knew he was looking at her. Everything seemed to combine to make life more and more dismal as she looked down the slope of the years.

Worst of all, and unguessed, she found herself being drawn more and more to the tall, handsome physician. His personality seemed to the weakened and worried girl at shelter within which there was kindness and peace.

The full force of the situation did not strike her until one momentous day, when a girl came into the office, lovely with the loveliness that is always suggestive of June time and roses. She was welcomed with manifest pleasure by Walter, and the stricken girl in her simple gray and white dress felt the world sing about her.

"I must be brave," she said to herself. "I must. He just pities me, and I must not trouble him."

Two weeks went by. The Junetide girl came and went with Walter; and his interest in her presence was evident.

Then came the day that bore with it a change of destiny.

The Junetide girl, her face flushed with joy, hurried from the office and Walter, following with as much pleasure shining on his, went with her.

Doris watched them go, and guessing what had taken place between them, felt the room about her grow gray as with dusk. From her world the last sunshine went. Through the darkness came a suggestion. She trembled. To go through life alone—an object of pity when she was so hungry for love, for beauty and happiness and youth—it was too much.

The afternoon waned. The din of the great city ebbed into the low monotone suggestive of tides that have spent their force, drawing outward to the sea. She sat in silence, then quietly she went to the cabinet in which he kept the drugs with which he stocked his case. She knew every compartment. From a bottle she shook out with a steady hand three tablets—morphine—enough to send her into the long and restful sleep which would carry her beyond suffering, beyond pity, beyond heartache.

Taking them, and shivering only slightly in the act, she turned to the couch and lay down. "I am sorry, dear, for the trouble and bother I shall cause you, but I am weary beyond weariness."

Out of the darkness came a voice, insistent, firm and thrilling, with a meaning that broke into her consciousness. She opened her eyes, feeling strangely rested and at peace.

The lights were soft and shining in the office. Kneeling beside her, his face strained with anxious question, was Walter.

"Doris, Doris, what have you been trying to do?" The grief in his voice woke her to full consciousness. Sanely came. With a low cry she sprang up to find herself caught in his arms and held tight.

"Don't pity me!" she begged breathlessly.

His voice indicated that he had found himself. "I don't pity you." He drew her closer to him. "I love you! How blind you have been! Haven't you seen?"

"Seen? You love me—me?" she questioned in a whisper.

"Listen, you stay in my arms until I am through. I do love you—have from the time I saw you in the ward, but you have given me no sign—wrapped in your own thought; is that it?"

"But look at me!"

His mellow laugh relieved the tension. "So that is it! Foolish girl, I am not one of those who love a face; I love the spirit behind those brown eyes of yours—a troubled spirit now. Let me bring it peace. May I? Just say 'Yes'."

She clung to him. Speech was beyond her for the moment. After a struggle she whispered: "And I have loved you—from the moment you looked at me and spoke to me, but I did not dream—"

The dream begins now, my dear, to come true," his lips brushed her warm and quivering ones. "Let's close the office. Then we'll go for a long spin under the stars. We—"

She remembered. Horror filled her eyes. "But I took morphine! Why did I?"

"No," he said gently: "I was worried about you, and was fearful myself. I had filled that bottle with harmless sugar pills. Little girl, I have watched you and kept ward over you. I did not intend to lose you—waiting in hopes that you would take some interest in me."

The music in her heart died at the shock of her recollection. At his last words it started up softly the music that links eternity to eternity.

"You love me—even my hideous face!" she said again, as if the news were too good to be true.

He turned in his authoritative physician's way, and going to the corridor, returned with a mirror. "You sensible soul, you ought to know those scars have faded out!"

She took the mirror...wondering, a last wonder surging in her heart. All those long weeks she had kept her vow never to look upon her marred face. She took the mirror, his eyes tender upon her. One glance was enough. The blue, vivid scars were gone. Memories of them would remain, but his love would heal even them with the balm that is the surest healing of all woes of earth—the balm of a great love.

HIS WORD OF REAL WORTH

World Would Be Better if There Were More Like This Omaha Business Man.

An Omaha newspaper man has a motor car, remarks the World Herald of that city. Last spring he had it painted. Not long ago the surface began to develop an amazing series of cracks like the "crow's feet" about an old man's eyes. The man greeted the cracks with amazement rapidly becoming disgust. Every time he looked at the car he lost his appetite and his good temper.

The other day the car was taken to the paint shop. Its owner was fully prepared to hear that he had used the wrong kind of polish, that he had let the car stand out in the sun, that anything and everything had spoiled the paint except that the paint itself was at fault.

The painter looked the car over. "If you'll bring it in, I'll do it over," he said. "The varnish must have been bad."

It was all over in two minutes. The man's faith in human nature jumped several hundred per cent. The sky was clear; the whole world was set in rose hue.

Here was a man who didn't dodge responsibility, who tried no excuse, who backed his work with his word and made good his word.

Isn't it a pretty good policy?

ENDED WITH HONORS EVEN

Rattlesnake and Pet Cat Staged Battle Which Caused Death of Both Combatants.

William Lessig, gatekeeper at the Erie railroad crossing east of Ramapo, N. J., tells a story of a battle he saw between a rattlesnake and a pet cat. It ended fatally for both.

Mr. Lessig saw a rattler about four feet long going toward the river. He picked up a club and was about to start for it when, he declares, a cat leaped out ahead of him and set upon the snake.

The cat got a fine hold on the back of the rattler's head. But the snake fought desperately and got in a sting which caused the cat to release its hold and crawl away.

In twenty minutes the cat's body was swollen almost twice its size and the poison finally caused death.

The snake had been so severely wounded it was unable to find cover and when a crow discovered it lying in the open field it was too weak to offer resistance and was soon swinging in the air as the bird made off with it.

Loves His Melon.

Watermelons have been high in price this season, but "Uncle Joe" Cannon has gone right ahead eating them. It is a habit acquired by him when he was a small boy in North Carolina.

Consequently the eighty-three-year-old statesman waits each year for the arrival of the watermelon season, and just as soon as the ripe ones begin to arrive Uncle Joe may be seen sticking a big chunk of something red into his mouth. Sometimes he goes at it "coons fashion" and plays a solo with his lips on a long, red slice, throwing away such implements as knives and forks.

Uncle Joe can tell when a watermelon thumps right and knows by the color and general appearance whether the melon is sweet and juicy or was pulled top green.

Wise Child.

A miserly landlord was going round collecting his rents the other day. At one house he was nearly interested in a little girl who watched open-mouthed and open-eyed the business of paying over the money and accepting the receipts.

He patted her on the head and started to search his pockets, saying: "I must see what I have got for you."

After searching his pockets for some time he at last brought out from a remote corner a peppermint.

As he handed it to the girl he said: "And now what will you do with that?"

The little girl looked at it, then at him and replied: "Wash it."

English Women Buying Farms.

Women in England are buying their own farms or their own truck and garden spaces in rather conspicuous numbers. And this is all an outcome of the tremendous work done by women on the land during the war. The general feeling is that there will not be much room for the common female farm laborer as time advances, but for the woman who has a little money and who looks upon farming as her profession and her life work there is excellent opportunity in this direction.

In the first place, on account of the compact location of the garden spaces and the cities in England transportation of foodstuffs is easy. Then garden truck and flowers do grow abundantly and profusely there, and always find ready markets.

The Forgetful Parson.

Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson tells an amusing story of an old West country parson who had to hold two services—one in his own church and one in the church over the moor.

On arriving at the latter church he got into the pulpit and said he was awfully sorry, but he had forgotten to bring a most admirable sermon which he had written.

"Luckily," he continued, "as I came across the moor, I remembered a beautiful story, which I will tell you in place of the sermon. 'Er-rer-well, daah it, I've forgotten that, too!'

TAKING NO CHANCES



CLINIC HAS PROVED WORTH

Organization Established by Boston Firm Well Worthy of Imitation by Other Employers.

A pioneer medical clinic, established 15 years ago to protect the health of 600 employees, and gradually enlarged and expanded until it now cares for a total of 2,700—that is the record proudly held today by a well-known Boston firm. At the time of its organization the medical director was in charge of the clinic in the capacity of director and visiting nurse. Now the clinic is in charge of a practicing physician and surgeon, assisted by three full-time graduate nurses.

During the influenza epidemic of last winter, over 350 employees were treated per day, with only six deaths during the entire course of the dreaded disease. All cases were given careful individual attention and, in instances where no family doctor was in attendance, immediate arrangements were made for medical care.

It is the policy of the nurses in the clinic to advise all employees with whom they come in contact to be insured, an activity which the firm itself handles through an employees' organization. The purpose of such advice is to secure insurance for all employees in order that they may receive its benefits after one week's illness.

This arrangement does not place a premium upon the employees' being ill, and at the same time the clinic operates in the matter of insurance.

A dental clinic is in a formative state and, no doubt, will be established in a short time. The plan and method of administration and organization is simply in the making, but it is safe to say that the dental clinic will be as efficient as the medical clinic.

The Modern Hospital, in describing the clinic, says that it has fully proved its value in protecting the health of the employees of this particular company and merits the commendation and imitation of other mercantile and industrial establishments.

SEEMINGLY NO AGE LIMIT

Applicants for Divorce Are by No Means Always in the Days of Their Callow Youth.

There is no age limit to divorce. In Oregon a woman at the age of eighty-two years is suing for a decree from her husband, who is a callow stripling of seventy-one summers. This seems to be another case of too much mother-in-law, as the wife asserts that her husband's love has been alienated and undermined through the work of his mother, who is now ninety-four years old and who never did like her, anyhow. They have been married some ten years now, and the wife said that when the husband took her money to buy an auto for his mother and wouldn't let his wife ride in it, she knew that his love was dead. When she remonstrated the husband coldly informed her that she could leave the house. When the wife said that the home was her own and bought with her own money the husband replied that might be so, but he had thoughtfully had the deed recorded in his own name. Now she has to appeal to the courts. It is rather rough when a bride of eighty-two has to compete with a ninety-four-year-old mother-in-law for the affections of her husband.

A Foreign Ship.

Homer L. Ferguson, president of the chamber of commerce of the United States has stirred up the patriots over the reproduction of a foreign ship bearing on our twenty-dollar bills. Making a speech recently, and seeking to impress his auditors with the fact that this country has entirely too few ships, he whipped out a twenty-dollar bill and declared:

"Why, even the ship reproduced on this bill is one that was taken over by this country during the war. It flies the American flag, all right, but it is a foreign-built ship."

Examination proved he was absolutely correct. The ship has four funnels, and there never has been a four-funnelled ship built in this country for our foreign trade.

The Mean Man.

Everybody knows the story about poor Tom Sharkey, who electrified the loungers in his saloon one day by saying heartily, "Well, boys, what are we going to have?" And then, as the loungers gathered round the bar, he added, "Rain or shine?"

Representative Gordon Lee of Chickamauga told a story of a kind man at Atlantic City. Some friends visited him on a hot evening and after they had sweltered a while in the sitting room he said:

"Well, friends, could you stand some refreshments?"

"We certainly could!" the visitors replied, and they moistened their dry lips in pleasant anticipation.

"Then," said the mean man, rising, "we'll open this window. There's promise of a breeze."

The Uplift.

A senator, apropos of the huge quantity of army meat which it was proposed should be sold to the packers for less than half the price paid them by the government, said:

"Why sell this meat to the packers? Would it not be better to sell it to consumers direct and thus aid in reducing the cost of living?"

The senator added bitterly:

"The high cost of living!